

Harnessing **THE POWER** of Corporate Events

How Canon,
eBay, Toyota
and Others
Do It



BY LISA GOELL SINICKI, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Face-to-face contact with peers. The opportunity to touch and feel products. Access to new ideas to recharge, enhance and grow the business. Expositions provide this and more—so it's no wonder so many corporations are harnessing the power of expositions to create their own proprietary events.

It's a powerful formula. Take the traditional trade show experience—exposition, general sessions, educational sessions and networking events. Then mix, match and adapt the components to fulfill one company's specific business strategy.

Corporations that stage private events start with a target audience and specific business agenda, then build from there. Audiences can be consumer end users, business end users, dealers/resellers, franchisees, business partners or application developers.

The event is then constructed around the audience and the host company's business objectives. Content is king, and the right mix of networking events, educational sessions and exposition is the key to success.

The role of the exposition portion of the event can vary greatly. Some companies, such as Ace Hardware, aim to maximize the number of exhibiting companies to give their attendees access to as many products and ideas as possible. Others treat the show floor as a "solutions lab," inviting only a handful of key business partners whose products compliment or enhance their own. In the case of the Wendy's franchisee meeting, only approved suppliers are invited to participate. Still others, such as Canon Expo, are a one-man-show where the host company creates one giant exhibit experience to showcase its own products and services.

And bigger isn't necessarily considered better. Many companies prefer to showcase only a handful of business partners in their exposition. These are often sponsors who have helped under-

write the event to some extent. Many times custom exhibits are disallowed in favor of exhibit packages with pre-selected exhibit properties. This levels the playing field; reinforces the goal of the education; and makes participation by exhibitors more cost effective.

Because of this difference in approach versus the traditional trade show model, net square footage is an alien concept to many corporate event managers. What matters is gross square footage—the space they require from the convention facility to accommodate their entire event.

The scheduling of corporate events varies from case to case. Some corporate events are annual or biennial. Others, such as the NAPA Expo, are held irregularly—or as often as the corporation feels that getting everyone together will be advantageous. And some have been

one-time-only experiments replaced by smaller, more intimate events or road shows that travel to the attendees. The length of the event can be anywhere from two to five days, with some events staying in one location and others rotating from city to city.

The final aspect of the corporate equation is revenue. The event manager must determine what their event's value to the audience will be and their ability to draw prime prospects to the event. Then the model can be designed to either generate positive revenue streams, to break even, or more often, as a cost center in the marketing budget.

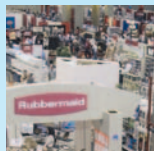
And that's the most dramatic difference between most corporate events and traditional trade shows. For a corporate event, profit from the event isn't always necessary. The profit comes later in the form of increased sales.

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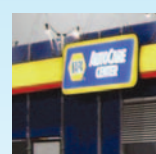
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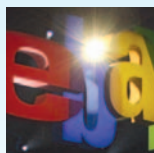
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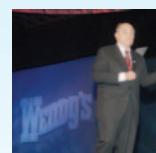
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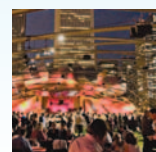
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Ace Hardware Convention & Exhibits

TYPE OF EVENT: Business to franchisee

EVENT MANAGER: Ron Gregg, National Convention, Meetings & Travel Manager, Ace Hardware Corporation at (630) 990-6641 or rgregg@acehardware.com.

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: Ace Hardware

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: The Expo Group

AUDIENCE: Ace retailers and store employees.

EVENT GOAL: Connect buyers & sellers, offer networking opportunities, offer educational opportunities, and introduce new programs and product.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS: Number of attendees, attendee satisfaction measured via post-event survey and number of media impressions.

TIMING AND TIME FRAME: The semi-annual show is held for five days in the Spring and Fall. The show location rotates.

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 17,000

HOTEL ROOM NIGHTS: 20,000 to 22,000

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS: 560,000 gross square feet of exhibit floor space to showcase 1,300 exhibiting companies located in 2,300 exhibits. Rooms for 200 meetings ranging in size from 10 to 3,000 people.

HIGHLIGHTS: Pallet Alley where retailers can take advantage of more than 500 product deals, all discounted as large-volume purchases; Seasonal/Trim-a-



Data Download. Attendees of ACE Hardware Convention & Exhibits experience educational opportunities and learn about new programs on products during five days of exhibits, sessions and meetings. Big savings can be found on the show floor.

Tree showcasing new items and programs for the upcoming year's holiday and seasonal demands; and a Category Management area to assist retailers in choosing the right product mix to drive sales.

Most memorable part of the event: Ace honored 42 bike riders that participated in its Tour de Kids, a nine-week trek of 4,300 miles from Seattle to Boston to raise money for the Children's Miracle Network.

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Canon EXPO 2005 in New York

TYPE OF EVENT: Business to Business (dealer/reseller)

EVENT MANAGER: Susan Turner, Event Manager, Canon

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: MJM, Inc.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: MC²

AUDIENCE: Key Accounts, retailers and invited professionals

EVENT GOAL: Showcase the Canon brand. Exhibit Canon's complete product line

and introduce new technologies and future products.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS: The number of attendees, industry press coverage and resulting dealer sales.

TIMING AND TIME FRAME: The event is held once every five years for three days. The show location rotates.

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 5,000

HOTEL ROOM NIGHTS: 10,000

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS: 120,000 gross square feet of exhibit space and theater seating for the keynote address. A sit-down eating area providing snacks and a buffet lunch for all attendees.

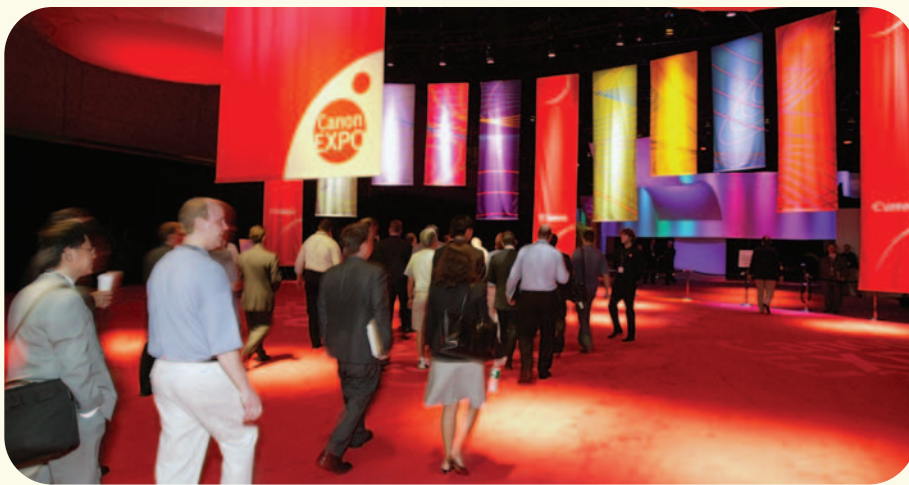
TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS: The contractors worked closely with Canon to set up and test sophisticated prototype equipment. Heavy use of rigging and theatrical lighting.

HIGHLIGHTS: The entire exposition was a choreographed experience. Attendees started at a 360-degree immersive multimedia presentation, then proceeded to a theater presentation focusing on some of the highlights of the expo. At the end of the presentation, the video screen at the rear of the stage opened to reveal the expo beyond.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: The environment and experience had to serve two distinctly different customer audiences—office automation (office machines) and consumer electronics.

MOST MEMORABLE PART OF THE EVENT:

Glimpses at new proprietary technologies that represent the next generation of TVs.



Two Worlds. Canon targeted two customer groups, office automation and consumer electronics, with a choreographed experience that began with a 360-degree immersive presentation and ended on show floor.

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eBay Live!

TYPE OF EVENT: Business to Consumer and Business Client

EVENT CONTACT: Abby Green, event manager and Sravanthi Agrawal, Manager, Corporate Communications, at (408) 376-6927 or agreen@ebay.com or sravanthi@ebay.com.

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: The Chase Group

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Freeman

AUDIENCE: Consumers and businesses who are or would like to become eBay buyers and sellers.

EVENT GOAL: Provide eBay users with tools that will help increase their success in using the site. Provide a venue for eBay Community members to meet

face-to-face, share, learn and have fun.



Abby Green

MEASURES OF SUCCESS: Number of attendees, attendee satisfaction measured via post-event survey and number of media impressions.

TIMING AND TIME FRAME: Held annually in June. The show location rotates.

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 11,600

HOTEL ROOM NIGHTS: eBay does not provide room blocks for attendees.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS: 175,000 gross square feet of exhibit space; 90,000 square feet of function space for cocktail receptions; seating for 8,000 in general sessions; and meeting rooms for 186 breakout sessions.

UNIQUE FEATURES: 30,000 square foot Kid Camp; networking dinners for 2,000; an event staff of 750; and an 84-bus transportation plan.

HIGHLIGHTS: Keynote by Meg Whitman, President and CEO of eBay. The *eBay Live!* Gala closing party in 2005 featured a concert with the B-52's and a clapping tunnel where 800 eBay employees showed the attendees their appreciation.

MOST MEMORABLE PART OF THE EVENT: *eBay's 10th Anniversary Gala*. To celebrate, eBay rented Great America and hosted a BBQ for attendees in 2005.

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Wind Tunnel? To build the eBay community, the company hosted a closing gala that featured the B-52's and a tunnel of clapping eBay employees. The energy and enthusiasm were also reflected on a show floor that spanned 175,000 gross square feet.

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JavaOne: Sun's Worldwide Java Developer Conference

TYPE OF EVENT: Peer to peer

EVENT MANAGER: Alvina O'Neal, JavaOne Conference Manager at (650) 352-4767.

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: Conference Planners

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Champion Exposition Services

AUDIENCE: Software developers

EVENT GOAL: JavaOne provides an educational program on Java technology that encourages networking among application developers and highlights the products, technologies and communities focused on the Java platform.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS: 42% alumni return rate; high attendee satisfaction rates per survey results; over 1,500 submissions for approximately 300 speaking opportunities; continued industry support measured by co-sponsor and exhibitor participation.

TIMING AND TIME FRAME: This four-day conference is held annually in May or June at The Moscone Center in San Francisco. Fall events were also held in Japan in 2001, 2003 and 2005.

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 14,000

HOTEL ROOM NIGHTS: 20,113

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS: 161,465



Alvina O'Neal

gross square feet of exhibit space; classroom seating for 7,000 in the General Session; 90 co-sponsors/exhibitors; 20 meeting rooms; 278 educational sessions; banquet seating for 5,000.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Bomb-sniffing dogs; enhanced security for executives and special activities.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS: Registration, material pick-up, lead retrieval and other programs run on the Java platform; wireless access throughout and networking capabilities for every attendee; 150 Sun Workstations for demos and sessions.

HIGHLIGHTS: Past activities have included: the annual James Gosling tee-shirt toss; appearance by Magic Johnson; Device Museum showcasing the evolution of technology; demo/appearance of the Mars Rover, Hubble Telescope, Boeing Airplane, BMW; performers such as the B-52's, Blues Traveler, Dana Carvey and Dennis Miller; Urban Adventure scavenger hunt; and "picketers" with "I Love Java" signs.

MOST MEMORABLE PART OF THE EVENT: *The 2005 Java Technology 10th Birthday Celebration.*



Happy Birthday. JavaOne celebrated its 10th birthday in 2005 with 14,000 attendees and 90 co-sponsors and exhibitors.